

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 08936 220942Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 AID-05
TRSE-00 OMB-01 IGA-02 EB-07 XMB-04 FRB-01 /087 W
----- 090495 /11

R 220800Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5287

UNCLAS TUNIS 8936

E.O. 11652:N/A
TAGS: PFOR TS
SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTY DISCUSSES RELATIONS
WITH U.S.

1. DURING NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATE OF MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS BUDGET ON DECEMBER 17 FOREIGN MINISTER HABIB CHATTY DISCUSSED TUNISIA'S RELATIONS WITH U.S. ACCORDING TO ACCOUNT IN ARABIC/LANGUAGE DAILY AS-SABAH, CHATTY NOTED THAT "IMPORTANT" ASSISTANCE GIVEN TO TUNISIA BY U.S. HAS BEEN DECLINING OVER PAST YEARS. TAKING NOTE OF MANIFESTATIONS OF CLOSE BILATERAL RELATIONS OVER THE PAST YEAR (VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER'S PARTICIPATION IN TUNISIA'S TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE, HABIB BOURGUIBA, JR.'S PARTICIPATION IN U.S. BICENTENNIAL, AND SENATE RESOLUTION HONORING PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA ON HIS BIRTHDAY), CHATTY REPORTED ON THE MEETING OF THE U.S.-TUNISIAN JOINT COMMISSION IN OCTOBER. HE SAID "REGULAR" AID WAS DISCUSSED AS WELL AS TUNISIA'S OBJECTIVES FOR THE FIFTH DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND HOPES FOR U.S. PARTICIPATION IN IT. HE NOTED THAT U.S. AGREED TO PROVIDE TUNISIA \$65 MILLION IN GRANTS AND LOANS TO FINANCE SEVERAL PROJECTS INCLUDING THE PURCHASE OF U.S. MILITARY EQUIPMENT.

2. CONCERNING THE FIFTH PLAN, CHATTY SAID THAT TUNISIA
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PAGE 02 TUNIS 08936 220942Z

HAD SUBMITTED RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION TO U.S. AND EXPLAINED WHAT IT HOPES TO HAVE IN ASSISTANCE. HE ADDED THAT USG WAS UNABLE TO MAKE ANY COMMITMENTS BECAUSE OF THE ELECTIONS, AND THAT GOT MUST NOW TALK WITH THE NEW ADMINISTRATION. CHATTY DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION WOULD BRING GREAT CHANGES IN U.S. POLICY TOWARD TUNISIA OR THE

ARAB WORLD IN GENERAL.

3. REGARDING MIDDLE EAST, CHATTY SAID U.S. HAS IMPORTANT SECURITY INTERESTS IN REGION WHICH MUST BE PROTECTED. HE STATED THAT PRINCIPLES OF U.S. POLICY FOR REGION WOULD REMAIN UNCHANGED, ALTHOUGH METHODS OF NEW PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY OF STATE MAY BE DIFFERENT. IT WOULD BE IN THE INTERESTS OF THE U.S. TO SEE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM RESOLVED, AS CONTINUATION OF CRISIS WOULD CONSTITUTE A DANGER TO U.S. BY PRESENTING SOVIET UNION AN OPPORTUNITY TO INFILTRATE THE REGION.

4. CHATTY NOTED STATEMENTS OF THE INCOMING ADMINISTRATION FAVORING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE AND SAID TUNISIA FAVORS THIS APPROACH BUT ONLY, HE EMPHASIZED, WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PLO. CHATTY REITERATED STANDARD TUNISIAN POLICY THAT THERE CAN BE NO SOLUTION TO THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM WITHOUT THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PLO AND ITS APPROVAL OF THE SETTLEMENT.
MULCAHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976TUNIS08936
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760469-0568
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761219/aaaaapzu.tel
Line Count: 81
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 MAY 2004 by hattaycs>; APPROVED <29 DEC 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTY DISCUSSES RELATIONS WITH U.S.
TAGS: PFOR, EAID, TS, (CHATTI, HABIB)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006